

REMARKS

Claims 1, 8-13 and new claims 14-24 are now in this application. Claims 1 and 8-13 and objected to and rejected. Claims 2-7 are previously cancelled. Claims 1 and 8-13 are amended herein to clarify the invention, to broaden language as deemed appropriate and to address matters of form unrelated to substantive patentability issues. Other formal matters are attended to that were not addressed by the Examiner and accordingly are considered unrelated to substantive patentability issues.

A substitute Abstract is submitted herewith in better compliance with U.S. practice.

For the convenience of the Examiner, APPENDIX I is provided herewith having a complete set of pending claims with all amendments effected therein.

Claim Objections

Claims 1 and 8-13 are amended to remove the informalities in the manner suggested by the Examiner to thereby overcome the objection to the claims.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1, 8, 12 and 13 are amended to remove the informalities noted by the Examiner to thereby overcome the rejection of claims 1 and 8-13 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1 and 8-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshihito (Japanese Publication No. 09-220,369) in view of Takemoto (U.S. Pat. No. 5,890,962).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that Yoshihito and Takemoto do not disclose a game system including all of the features of independent claim 1 and the game control method and storage medium of independent claims 12 and 13, respectively.

Claim 1 is directed to a game system including a game controller which executes a card game with a novel feature to produce a dividend or payout to a player. Specifically, the game controller includes a card deciding device for deciding which cards to display on a game screen in a matrix and a betting device for setting a number of lines of a plurality of lines formed by the cards on the game screen depending on the value of a play which a player sets by operating the input device, e.g., the higher the play value, the more lines are set. Each of the set lines is referred to as an effective line and the effective lines are set in only one direction of the matrix, e.g., either in a horizontal or vertical direction when the matrix is a two-dimensional matrix.

The game controller also includes a dividend controlling device for controlling a dividend for the player according to a combination of the cards on any

of the effective lines and a combination of the cards in a direction different from the direction of the effective lines. The dividend controlling device provides the dividend when a successful hand is formed on any of the effective lines and also provides the dividend or changes a previously provided dividend when a maximum number of the effective lines in the matrix are selected and a predetermined combination is formed by the cards in a diagonal direction or in a direction perpendicular to the effective lines.

Therefore, in the invention, the player can set or bet on effective lines in only one direction of the matrix of cards yet is able to win (gain a dividend) when a winning combination is present on a line in a direction other than the direction of the effective lines, which line is not an effective line and was not bet on. For example, the player can bet on only horizontal effective lines and win based on a combination of cards in a diagonal line or a line perpendicular to the effective lines. That is, even though the player cannot bet on combinations of cards in a vertical or diagonal direction (when the effective lines are horizontal as in the embodiment illustrated in the application), the player can still win if he sets the maximum number of lines as effective lines and a combination appears on a diagonal or vertical line (as described in the specification, for example, at page 4, lines 15-19).

One advantage of this feature is that the play of the game is not monotonous and provides an element of surprise and accidental performance leading to unexpected.

Independent claims 12 and 13 include features similar to those set forth in claim 1.

Yoshihito and Takemoto do not disclose a game system which enables a player to obtain a dividend on a combination of symbols in a line which has not been set or bet upon as set forth in claims 1, 12 and 13.

Yoshihito describes a game apparatus in which a dividend is provided when a predetermined combination of cards in a single horizontal line is formed (see Fig. 6). However, Yoshihito does not mention the possibility of a player selecting a variable number of lines to play the poker game.

Takemoto describes a game machine in which a player can designate which of a plurality of preset betting lines 1-5 (effective lines) as shown in Fig. 3A to play (see col. 10, lines 44-67). Betting lines 1-3 are horizontal lines while betting lines 4 and 5 are diagonal lines. The player wins only if a combination along one of the played betting lines appears and does not win or obtain any dividend or increase in dividend when a combination appears on a betting line which is not played. Thus, if the player bets only for betting lines 1-3 and a winning combination appears along one of betting lines 4 or 5, the player does not win.

In contrast to the invention, Takemoto does not disclose, teach or suggest producing a dividend to the player (or increasing a previously produced dividend) when betting lines (effective lines) do not include a winning combination of symbols but lines through the symbols which have not been bet on (and are either diagonal or perpendicular to the lines which have been bet on) include a winning combination of symbols. Rather, both Yoshihito and Takemoto require the player to bet on a specific betting line in order to win and do not allow the player to obtain a dividend if a winning combination of symbols appears on a line which has not been bet on as set forth in claims 1, 12 and 13.

Since Yoshihito and Takemoto do not include all of the features of claims 1, 12 and 13, one skilled in the art could not combine features of the references and arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in claims 1 and 8-13. The Examiner's rejection of claims 1 and 8-13 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshihito in view of Takemoto has therefore been overcome and should be removed and the present application should be in condition for allowance.

New Claims

Claims 14-24 are presented and are directed to additional features of the invention described in the specification.

In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited. Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enc. Appendix I